

READING COALITION AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE-2018 ANNUAL REPORT

SUMMARY- Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse (RCASA) mobilizes community partners, residents and youth to build collaborative approaches and reduce youth substance abuse. With grant support, RCASA offers educational programs for residents in Substance Abuse Prevention, Youth Mental Health First Aid and Active Parenting. To address substance use, RCASA staff operates a juvenile diversion program in concert with the Reading Police Department and a Chemical Health Education Program with the Reading Memorial High School. To increase access to mental health services, RCASA sponsors the Interface Referral Service, operated by William James College. Learn more at www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa

HONORS-The National Drug Free Communities Evaluation Team acknowledged RCASA for their strong partnership with the Reading Police Department including the Rx Round Up Program, which has processed more than 46,000 Rx bottles since 2009. Sherri VandenAkker, representing the RCASA Board of Directors, accepted the National Recovery Month Award in Washington, D.C. in September for “2017 Reading Unites for Recovery Project”. RCASA was one of three organizations in the United States to receive this special recognition. The event was hosted by the United States Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Council on Behavioral Health. Reading Rotary acknowledged Erica McNamara, RCASA Director, as the recipient of the Club's first “Unsung Hero Award” at the Rotary District 7930’s first Unsung Hero Awards Night in November. Reading Rotary selected Erica McNamara as a special person in our community who wakes up every morning and puts others before herself and dedicates her work to helping others in need, truly embodying the Rotary motto: “Service above Self.” Reading Rotary also presented Erica McNamara with a Paul Harris Fellowship Award, one of the highest honors Rotary can give to an individual.

FINANCE-The RCASA Director compiled federal reports for annual grant funding totaling \$125,000. The Town, School and Police Departments contributed match resources for RCASA’s office/meeting space, supervision and oversight. During this fiscal year, the RCASA Director and Town Accountant filed the mandatory federal financial reports required by the funder.

Federal Grants Supporting RCASA	Annual	End
White House Office of National Drug Control Policy	\$125,000	9/30/19

The RCASA Director presented the Coalition’s Sustainability Plan to the RCASA Board of Directors in February. Tasks from the plan were addressed at meetings in March, April, May and June. State Representative James Dwyer, an RCASA supporter submitted a request to add an earmark to the state budget for \$10,000 in annual funding to support RCASA’s sustainability. This year, RCASA accepted mini-grants/donations including--Young Women’s League of Reading (\$1,000), Reading Rotary (\$500) and the Reading Hospital Board of Trustees (\$4,000). The Mission of Deeds donated in-kind services and furniture to stage the RCASA’s Hidden in Plain Sight Exhibit at the Reading Police Department. Donated services included delivery and pick up of bedroom furniture and accessories. In December, the RCASA Director provided a brief budget presentation to the Reading Select Board and Financial Committee on proposed town funding for RCASA in 2019-2020.

STAFF-This year, the RCASA staff included a full time Director and Part-Time Outreach Coordinator. Staff members are employees of the Town of Reading and maintain an office at the

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Reading Police Department. RCASA's Director oversaw fiscal management, public relations, community planning, training, coalition communication, data collection, dissemination, reports and program evaluation. RCASA's Outreach Coordinator disseminated educational information through a variety of activities to both youth and adults. The RCASA Outreach Coordinator completed annual continuing education requirements and renewed her Alcohol & Drug Counselor Certification. The RCASA Director completed prevention training workshops with the Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, the Center for Health & Safety Culture and the National Council on Behavioral Health.

LEADERSHIP-The RCASA's Board of Directors met monthly and served as the core leadership group for the coalition. The group included 24 members representing 12-plus community sectors who live, work or attend school in Reading. The Town Manager, School Superintendent, and Chief of Police all serve on the Board. The Board provided overall governance, education, public relations and strategic plan guidance. The Town provided the "Ethics Guide for Ballot Question Political Activity" to members. A full review of board by-laws, coalition branding, budget needs and future feasibility was discussed by members. With the federal grant ending, members determined it was prudent to have a legal review of the coalition's organizational structure.

The Federal DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES GRANT goals and prevention activities are below:

RCASA GOAL 1: REDUCE SUBSTANCE USE among youth and, over time, among adults by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse.

In October, Reading Memorial High School's Guidance Department and RCASA sponsored Lynn Lyons, Guest Speaker on "The Worry Cycle: Strategies for Managing Anxiety" for 400 local parents, drawing the largest audience for an RCASA event for the year. During the year, RCASA's Director facilitated 32 hours of Mental Health First Aid training this year certifying 38 adults in the Youth Module and 16 adults in the Adult Module. RCASA's Director conducted 10 presentations on Vaping Prevention reaching 80 adults including parents at middle and high school PTOs, Austin Preparatory parents and Reading Public Schools middle school staff

RCASA sponsored "Alex's Story: The Impact of Opioid Abuse" on April 5th for 594 students in grades 11 and 12 at Reading Memorial High School. The Reading Peer Leadership Council of 20 students hosted "Alex's Story" and facilitated the question and answer session. RCASA's Director and the School Resource Officer coordinated "Operation Opioid Prevention" workshops reaching 165 Reading Memorial High School students enrolled in the freshman Health course. A donation from Reading Rotary to support the "Operation Opioid Prevention" workshops paid for the printing and binding of Teacher Educator Lesson Packets from the DEA/Discovery Channel, for use in the next school year as well as Parent Guides, which were sent home with students.

From June to August, RCASA set up information booths at "Friends & Family Day", "The 2nd Annual Jams for Jake Event" and the "Reading Fall Street Faire". William James College staff attended the "Reading Senior Center Health Fair" and "Reading Memorial High School Back to School Night" events in September to increase awareness of the Interface Referral Service.

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The Reading Memorial High School Substance Abuse Screening Program for the Spring Semester of 2018 was completed for 11th graders and the Fall Semester of 2018 for 9th graders. Students were called down to the Nurse's office for confidential screening sessions with the lead Nurse. Students that scored positive were provided with resources and referred to appropriate services. RCASA's Outreach Coordinator provided the 650 screening tools, resource sheets, entered data and offered referral resources. Based on how the 604 students from Grade 9 and Grade 11 responded to screening questions, the Nurse provided educational info and positive reinforcement for 585 students, conducted motivational interviews with brief interventions for nine students and referred twelve students for additional services.

RCASA's Outreach Coordinator and the Reading Memorial High School Health Educator facilitated the "Chemical Health Education Program" monthly at Reading Memorial High School. Thirteen students completed the program. More students were referred for Chemical Health Violations due to Vaping, more than any other substance. RCASA's Outreach Coordinator conducted follow-ups with parents of students that completed the Chemical Health Education Program. RCASA's Director worked with a High School student bi-weekly to plan the "Dear 13 Year Old Me Video Project". RCASA's Director presented at the Reading Memorial High School Child Development Course on "Substance Exposed Newborns" in the fall of 2018 reaching 23 students. RCASA's Director presented on "Substance Abuse" at the Reading Citizen Police Academy educating 30 adults in November.

From January to November of 2018, "Reading's Interface Referral Service Program" provided by William James College served 80 Reading. Parents of elementary age children generated the second largest number of matches during this year. The most frequent requests in Reading for mental health support were for Anxiety or Depression which is typical for most communities.

RCASA GOAL 2: IMPROVE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION among RCASA's partners in support of the community's effort to prevent and reduce youth substance use,

Staff and law enforcement representatives participated in regional monthly meetings including the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition on Opioid and Alcohol Abuse, Eastern Middlesex District Attorney's Task Force, and the Woburn Police Roundtable on Opioid Abuse. Staff disseminated regional information to the community and board leaders to deepen their understanding of current drug-related concerns. RCASA responded to 12 technical assistance requests from other communities on how RCASA has developed our policies and programs.

Reading Police projects include the Reading Rx Round Up for 24/7 medication collection. RCASA's grant sponsored the cost of the Citizen Observer "Text A Tip Program" for Reading Police which allowed Detectives to process 142 anonymous tips in 2018 and paid for the "Alcohol Compliance Program" Operatives. RCASA staff also worked with Reading Police on special projects and data analysis on substance-related injuries.

Reading Memorial High School projects included the "Chemical Health Education Program", "SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention & Referral to Treatment) Program", "Reading Peer Leadership Council" and the "Operation Opioid Prevention Program with Reading Rotary".

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Community projects included the “Hidden in Plain Sight Exhibit” with the Mission of Deeds, Burbank YMCA and Reading Police.

RCASA contracted with William James College to offer the “Interface Referral Service” to connect residents to outpatient mental health services with the funding support of RCASA grants and Reading’s Hospital Trust Fund.

COLLABORATIVE DATA PROJECTS-

- 1) The RCASA Director served as the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Coordinator and assisted with the integration of Reading Public Schools into the John Snow Inc./Middlesex League Survey Group process for the next regional survey planned in spring 2019.
- 2) The “Rx Round Up” kiosk continued to see an increase in drop offs from residents. In 2018, 8,869 Rx bottles were processed. This reflects a 7% increase compared to 2017. Since 2009, residents turned in 44,445 Rx bottles.
- 3) To assess the impact of substance misuse and the number of opioid overdoses, RCASA tracked police log reports, reviewed regional reports and death certificates. Reading Police responded to 65 suspected drug-related overdoses in 2017-2018. Police handled 303 ‘Calls for Service’ in 2018 for Alcohol or Drugs including 52 DUI Offenses and 66 Drug Violations. The 2016 Lahey Hospital & Medical Center Community Health Needs Assessment, released this year, indicated that Reading was in the top 10 of cities/towns that had a higher average rate of opioid-related emergency department visits (333 per 100,000) compared to the Middlesex County rate (227) and state average (260). Death records in Reading for 2010-2017 indicated that 58 residents died from substance-related causes with 33% dying from Acute Poly-Intoxication, 31% Alcohol, 28% Heroin/Fentanyl/Opiates and 8% Cocaine. Demographics for these substance-misuse deaths were 72% male, 28% female and 96% were white. Reading death records indicated 89% of those that died from substance-related causes were at least partially employed at the time of their death with 22% employed in the trades and 20% in hospitality/food/retail.
- 4) RCASA partnered with the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition to gather data including death certificates for the latest regional needs assessment. The Outreach Coordinator conducted key informant interviews on opioid abuse. The Director compiled survey data.
- 5) The RCASA Director coordinated with the Reading Public Schools Climate Director to design a survey roll-out plan for the district to collect Pride Survey data from students, teachers and parents of students enrolled in elementary, middle, or high school. Parents and teachers in grades K-12 and students in grades 6-8 at both middle schools finished the survey in June. Students in grades 10-12 completed the survey in September. Funding was provided by the District. The RCASA Director served as Survey Co-Coordinator and worked with 9 Principals to initiate and monitor data collection. Substance misuse data will be incorporated into RCASA’s Need Assessment.

PUBLIC RELATIONS- We expanded our communication strategies using print, online and in person approaches. RCASA staff used Twitter to increase event attendance including [Twitter.com/rcasa15](https://twitter.com/rcasa15) (210 Followers compared to 153 in 2017) and [Twitter.com/ReadingPolice](https://twitter.com/ReadingPolice) (10.8K followers). We maintained the website at [Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse](http://ReadingCoalitionAgainstSubstanceAbuse.org) with the support of Reading Public Schools and continue to send out our newsletter (600 people). Local cable access taped the RCASA Annual Meeting.